

## Welcome Address

*John C. Browne*

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Good Morning. It is my pleasure to welcome you to Los Alamos National Laboratory. We are pleased that we have the opportunity to host this conference. In looking through the agenda and the list of attendees, I was very impressed with what the organizers of the conference have been able to put together. Indeed, it is a very timely conference. As many people have written on this subject since September 11, this could be a war or a set of conflicts that goes on for decades. In my thoughts about this over the last few months, I recognize that this is true for the United States. However, if you look at what other countries have faced in terms of terrorism, this is something that has been going on for many decades and it has just hit the United States since September 11.

This laboratory has had an interest in confronting terrorism for many decades. Going back in time to the 1970's, we formed the nuclear emergency search teams that have been so very dedicated over this period of time, to putting together technological tools that would help this country and people all around the world with nuclear terrorism. During the 1980's, we also hosted some people here in the United States, who came and talked to us about the changing tide of terrorism around the world. That led to a period in the 1990's (1995-1996 timeframe) when my predecessor, Sig Hecker, was able to convince several members of our senate to look at chemical and biological terrorism as another piece of the puzzle. Chemical and biological terrorism had, in fact, been seriously neglected in the funding of efforts to confront terrorism.

I was in Washington on September 11. It was ironic that I happened to be coming out of the Senate Office Building and walking right in front of the United States Capitol. We saw the smoke rising from the plane that had hit the Pentagon Building. We knew immediately that the events that we had heard about in New York were now much wider. In fact, as we were in front of the Capitol Building, the Capitol Police had indications that there was yet another plane headed for the United States Capitol. They were pushing us away from the main Capitol Building. It was quite an experience. Obviously, I hate to think about what would have happened if, in fact, the last plane had gotten to Washington. Where would it have hit?

It was very hard to get through to the people here at the laboratory after my first cell phone call, which I immediately made back here. I told them we needed to go to higher security. The thing about our laboratory that is so great is that our people had already gone up on higher security by the time I made the phone call. It made me feel very, very good. After that call, I was not able to get through to anyone for a long time. I finally got through to my family. My daughter, who was 15 at the time, asked me this question. "Dad, does this mean World War III?" I said, "No. There is really a difference between

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the type of war that World War II was,” and she stopped me and said, “No Dad. Is this the war for my generation?” I thought to myself, maybe she understands more about the future than I do. I told her that it may be that this generation will have to confront terrorism, not just for the next few years, but for many decades to come.

Certainly, the thing that concerns me is that although there are lots of technological developments that this laboratory and other laboratories around the world, universities, etc. can bring to bear on the problem, it is a much broader problem than just technology, but you all know that. The question that we have to ask ourselves is how do we bring technology to bear in a way that does not create situations that take away from the very freedoms that we want and hold so dear in this country and around the globe. This is the challenge for us. Can we come up with ways that to make it harder for terrorists to cause their acts, make it easier to find them, find out what they are doing, and provide better solutions for our country and for the globe? That is the challenge for us.

One of things that concerns me is that in this country, you sometimes read articles and get the feeling that terrorists are ten feet tall and have access to not only terrible weapons, but can also operate in ways in which we will not be able to deter them. I think that although we have to concern ourselves with that, we also have to remember that we have confronted serious types of threats like this in the past and we can do so again.

The second thing that concerns me is complacency. Complacency is something that I worry about for our country. I am concerned with complacency in distance and time resulting from changes in terrorist tactics. Concerning distance, what I worry about is that what if the next events do not occur in the United States? What if they occur in the Middle East, Europe, or elsewhere? How will our country respond to those kinds of events? There have been events that have occurred long before September 11 that our country did not really react very well to, in the sense of seeing the urgency of having to deal with them. Concerning complacency in time, I am concerned because if terrorist events of this type of magnitude do not occur for a decade, what do we do as a country? Do we merely continue to sustain the commitment to dealing with the types of technologies that need to be developed over, not a few months or even a few years, but perhaps decades? This is one of the challenges that our country, as well as other countries have. How do you sustain the commitment to fight this war on terrorism if it is sporadic, periodic, etc? I think this is something that we have to seriously think about.

We are very pleased to see this great turnout and we are pleased to host all of you here. I hope you have a wonderful stay. As Rajan Gupta said, there are very light snow flurries outside. As one of the employees said to me as I was walking over here, “Quick John, this is your last chance this year to declare a snow day.” To our visitors, and Sig Hecker will certainly appreciate this, I have always said that there are two things that laboratory directors get evaluated on by the employees. The first is whether they receive their paycheck every other Thursday and the second is whether the ski hill opens on time. This year the ski hill was hardly open at all. This is not a good year for laboratory directors. I am very pleased that you are all here, and again, wish you a great conference.

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